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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ACCRA 001164

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TAGS: [GH](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: MAKING SENSE OF GHANA'S CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: A. ACCRA 1076

[¶](#)B. ACCRA 1150

Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.5 d and e.

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: On April 27, Ghanaian President John Kufuor reshuffled his Cabinet, dropping six ministers, eliminating three ministries and shifting some portfolios. On May 12, he named new Deputy and Regional Ministers, reducing the overall number of ministers from 88 to 77 (see reftels). Kufuor sought to reenergize and strengthen his control over his government, as well as respond to longstanding pressures to reduce the size of government. In the reshuffle, Kufuor punished perceived disloyalty and to some degree poor performance. He rewarded loyalty and preserved regional and ethnic balance. Kufuor sought to ease internal party tensions in three key regions, although the reshuffle may also widen some divisions within his party. These changes may benefit some U.S. interests, although it is too soon to say. End summary.

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Punishing Disloyalty  
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[¶](#)2. (C) The major casualties of the Cabinet reshuffle were former Information Minister Dan Botwe and former Minister of Education and Sports Yaw Osafo-Maafo. Prior to the party convention of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) in November 2004, Botwe publicly backed Peter Mac Manu for the chairmanship of the ruling NPP, which was not the President's preference. Botwe recently told Pol FSN that he had privately criticized the President and officials in the Castle for corruption. A longtime party activist and former NPP General Secretary, he voiced displeasure at government actions which he believed undermined the image of the party. He was seen as openly favoring Osafo-Maafo for the NPP ticket in 2008. His outspoken independence ultimately cost him his job.

[¶](#)3. (C) Yaw Osafo-Maafo has actively campaigned for the NPP presidential slot in 2008, despite Kufuor's desire to keep his ministers' ambitions in check. Osafo-Maafo's newspaper criticized President Kufuor as "meek, weak and powerless." According to one senior editor and political analyst, the Education Minister is overly corrupt and unwilling to share his ill-gotten gains. Osafo-Maafo was dropped for not being a team player.

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And Poor Performance, Personal Clashes  
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[¶](#)4. (C) Other ministers were dropped because of poor

performance and/or personal clashes with the President. Former Science and Environment Minister Christine Churcher was a weak performer known for her egotistical, combative style. She sparred with many other ministers and party officials. Former Justice Minister and Attorney General Joseph Otoo was a weak performer who focused too much on himself and not on the party. Kufuor reportedly disliked former Minister of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD Kofi Konadu Apraku for his brash nature, occasional public criticism of Kufuor, and overly aggressive presidential ambitions.

**¶5. (C)** Former Minister of Energy Mike Oquaye has had difficulties with Kufuor for years. He was a weak performer who occasionally criticized Kufuor in the media. He was kept in the government as Minister of Communication because he has strong party ties and because he is only one of two ethnic Ga's in Cabinet.

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Rewarding Loyalty  
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**¶6. (C)** According to several astute political analysts, Kufuor has retained those in Cabinet who contained their ambitions and proved their personal loyalty. He kept several ministers widely perceived as corrupt (such as Richard Anane and Kwamena Bartels) and others who have open presidential aspirations (such as Alan Kyerematen, Nana Akufo-Addo, and Hackman Owusu Agyeman). However, they have consistently supported Kufuor. New Minister of Education Papa Owusu Ankomah is regarded as competent and strong in mediation skills, which are needed to sort out problems in the education sector. Perhaps most important to Kufuor, he is

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loyal, lacks presidential ambitions, and comes from the politically important Western Region.

**¶7. (C)** The new ministers are also loyalists. In addition to their loyalty, Attorney General Joe Ghartey, Local Government Minister Boateng, and Manpower Development and Employment Minister Boniface Siddique are young, ambitious, and competent.

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Regional and Ethnic Balancing  
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**¶8. (C)** While loyalty and closeness to the President were key in the reshuffle, some analysts, such as NPP insider Stephen Ntim, stressed the president's desire for regional and ethnic balance. Oquaye and new Minister of Aviation Gloria Akuffo owe their positions in part to the fact that they are the only ethnic Ga's in Cabinet, now that the former Attorney General has been dropped. Papa Owusu Ankomah and new Attorney General Ghartey are valued for their Western Region ties, while Boniface Siddique brings a second northern Muslim into Cabinet. Kufuor dropped two ministers from the Eastern Region in Botwe and Osafuo-Maafu, but retained three from the Eastern Region with Hackman Owusu Agyeman (Water Resources, Works and Housing), Akufo-Addo (Foreign Affairs), Owusu Adjepong (Parliamentary Affairs).

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New Deputy and Regional Ministers  
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**¶9. (C)** In response to longstanding pressures from NEPAD and elsewhere to reduce the overall size of his government, Kufuor on May 12 cut the number of ministers from 88 to 77. He changed the ministers of the politically key Western, Central and Ashanti Regions, largely to sort out internal party problems and infuse new blood (all three ministers had been in office since 2001). In Central Region, Nana Ato Arthur is a loyalist who has the backing of the local NPP,

replacing Isaac Edumadze who had a reputation for corruption and incompetence. In Western Region, Joseph Boahen Aidoo struggled with chieftaincy and environmental challenges, as well as internal party wrangling. Ashanti Regional Minister Sampson Boafo also faced opposition from within his party.

¶10. (C) In the latest reshuffle, Kufuor created four new Minister of State positions, including a Minister of Culture and Chieftaincy (responding to pressures from traditional leaders) and three Ministers in the Office of the President. These new portfolios are largely placeholders for influential individuals the President wants to sideline but not alienate. These include Minister of Culture and Chieftaincy Boafo (the former Ashanti Regional Minister) and former Minister of State for Tertiary Education Elizabeth Ohene (one of only two Ewes in Cabinet). They also include former Local Government and Rural Development Minister Charles Bintim, who was demoted for being ineffective and unable to account for \$200,000 reportedly deposited in a personal bank account in 2005, although he was kept as a minister apparently because he is the only tribal Konkomba in Cabinet. Seven Deputy Minister positions were also cut, including one each from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Lands, Forestry and Mines, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Private Sector and PSI, and Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and Science and Environment (because the ministry was eliminated.)

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Broader Implications for Kufuor  
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¶11. (C) Kufuor did not explain his reshuffle, and the media has criticized his decision to drop party heavy-weights Osafu-Maafo and Botwe without explanation. On May 10, Andrew Awuni, the new Press Secretary to the President told the media that the reshuffle "reflected the government's desire to strengthen its vision and refocus its programs and policies."

¶12. (C) Kufuor has reasserted his control over his government, strengthened loyalists, brought in some young blood, and reportedly put his Cabinet on edge at a time when his ability to influence the NPP has slipped. His new Press Secretary told the media that he will not speak without the

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President's authorization, a change from his outspoken predecessor. Kufuor's changes of regional ministers may

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tighten his control over the party in these politically important regions and strengthen his influence over party decisions as the 2007 party congress and 2008 national elections approach. Kofi Apraku's presidential ambitions were probably damaged by the reshuffle. Other aspirants within the government will now have to move more carefully.

¶13. (C) The reshuffle will likely accentuate divisions within the NPP. Osafu-Maafo already has significant wealth and name recognition, and now has more time for presidential campaigning, which he has already accelerated since his ouster. A senior pro-Kufuor NPP activist told PolChief that he and his supporters would strongly oppose an Osafu-Maafo candidacy. Dan Botwe will likely help the anti-Kufuor faction within the NPP. Critics within the party will point to Kufuor's decision to retain some ministers perceived as corrupt or poor performers.

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Comment  
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¶14. (C) The reshuffle allows Kufuor to infuse new momentum into the final two years of his administration. Retaining some ineffective, corrupt ministers is disappointing, but consistent with his cautious style and his value on personal

loyalty. His unexpected decision to retain his brother as Minister of Defense may also reflect a lingering paranoia about the loyalty of the uniformed military. The President created some odd configurations (such as the Office of the President portfolios) and created two new ministries. He retained the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, which the NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism had criticized as irrelevant. The powerful Senior Minister, J.H. Mensah, was dropped as a minister (he frequently clashed with other ministers) but retained his position as Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission.

¶15. (C) It is too soon to say how the reshuffle will affect U.S. interests in Ghana. Former Energy Minister Oquaye was often an obstacle in our efforts in the energy sector. The former Manpower minister was helpful and impressive and his shift to energy is encouraging. New Minister of Manpower, Boniface Siddique, is a friend to the Embassy and also an impressive performer. Former Attorney General Otoo was unresponsive on Embassy issues so the change may be helpful. New Education Minister Papa Owusu Ankomah was unhelpful to us as Attorney General but cooperative and friendly as Interior Minister. New Deputy Foreign Minister for Regional Integration and NEPAD Shirley Botchwey is well-regarded. Oboshi Sai-Cofie's shift from Deputy Chief of Staff to Deputy Minister for Information removes a helpful ally in the Castle. As we engage the new ministers, we will have a better sense of what the April reshuffle means for us. In the short term, the changes will likely slow decisionmaking as new ministers learn their portfolios.

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